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choosing a good Day Care home for your Child

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



Ontario Department of Social and Family Services
HON. THOMAS L. WELLS Minister M. BORCZAK Deputy Minister

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the choosing of a good

Good day care for children is a concern of all of us and the choice of a good day care home is an important task for any parent. In order to assist you in your choice, this booklet has been prepared by our Department, and I hope you will find it helpful.

Thomas L. Wells.

Thomas L. Wells, Minister.



Day Care home

Perhaps you are among the many parents who are not able to be home taking care of your children during the day. Or you may require temporary care for your children because of illness in the family or some other temporary condition. You will want to make arrangements so your children can have the best care possible while you are not with them.

There are several possibilities open to you.

Licensed day care centres or day nurseries provide day care for children of all ages for all day, part of the day, or after school. These day nurseries are staffed by personnel specially trained to look after the needs of young children.

If there is no licensed day nursery in your area which provides the type of services your child requires, you will need to look for a day care home. Or perhaps you may require 24 hour boarding care for your child (for a short period of time). This booklet has been prepared to help you choose good home care for your child.



What is a day care home?

In a day care home, the children of one, two or three families are given care during the day in the house or apartment of someone, usually a mother with her own children, who charges a fee for this service. The parent brings the child to and from the day care home and takes him to his own home for overnight.

In Ontario, day care homes are not licensed. You, the parent, have the responsibility of carefully selecting the home to be sure it is suitable for your child, and provides the best available day care.

How to locate a day care home for your child

If possible, you will want to find a home in your locality, in order to save travelling a long distance with your child. It is also better for your child to be among people and things he knows.

First of all, make inquiries in your own neighbourhood. Check with community agencies, local county, district, or municipal social service agencies or public health nurses. In larger cities there may be a central referral agency for day care of all types, or a family day care agency which supervises a selected group of day care homes. Check with city hall. Look at church bulletins, notices in local stores. Check newspaper advertisements, and the yellow pages of the phone book.

Before you phone prospective homes, list the questions that you would like to ask: the address, public transportation nearby, the ages and number of children given care, the fees, meal and sleeping arrangements, facilities for indoor and outdoor play, arrangements for the care of very young children or babies. When you have several homes you think may be suitable, you will want to visit them to make your choice. You will want to talk to the day care mother herself and check the space, health and safety of the home, and the arrangements for activities.

When you visit a prospective home, take your child along. In this way you will be able to acquaint yourself with the day care mother's attitudes to your child. You will also get your child's reaction to the mother, and the home.

When you first visit or telephone a home, avoid making obligations so that you will feel free to visit other homes before arriving at a decision.

It is worth spending as much time and care as you can in your choice, in order to find a home where your child can stay happily for considerable time.



What a good day care home provides

More than simple babysitting is provided by a good day care home. The child is loved, not merely supervised. Every child needs warm, motherly attention—attention and concern for what he says and what he does, both at the day care home, and within his own family.

Children need to be busily and happily playing alone and with each other.

The child's day should be planned by the day care mother and should include alternative quiet and active periods. However, the child should be able to choose activities for himself. He should not always be entertained nor should he always be set into a scheduled scheme of activities.

In addition, the child's safety is a major responsibility. Children are protected from hazards in the play area, indoors and out. Emergency situations are anticipated by the person in charge, so that any possible emergencies can be dealt with quickly and properly.

Choosing a good day care home for your child

The decision to place your child in a day care home is an important one. The choice of a good day care home is even more important. The following are a few things you should look for in a day care home for your child.

Look at the home

The day care home should be large enough to accommodate comfortably the day care mother's own family and the day care children too. There should be suitable space and facilities inside for play and rest. There should also be a fenced play area or park nearby.

It is hard to keep a home perfectly neat and tidy with active children about. However, it should be fairly easy to tell whether the person giving care can cope with children and her housekeeping at the same time.

Look out for the safety of your child. Play areas should be free of clutter, and poisons, medicines and cleaning fluids should be out of reach. Children should not be allowed to roam about too freely throughout the house, and there should be adequate protection from heating hazards, stoves, and from open stairways and exits.



Talk with the person who will be taking care of your child

The day care mother will be an important person in your child's life. She must be in good health and have had a chest X-ray or tuberculosis test within the past year.

Taking care of small children requires energy, patience and a lot of flexibility. You will want to be sure that the mother has arranged her household responsibilities so that she is always able to watch the children, and also have some time to spend with them — to talk with them, to encourage their play, to read stories, and take them out on walks in the park, the stores, the neighbourhood.

Have a talk with the day care mother. Find out about her attitudes towards child raising and things like punishment. Her attitude and manner toward the children should be gentle, loving and comforting, indicating acceptance of the child and of his family situation.

She should enjoy being with children. She should respect the child's feelings, showing an interest in the child's interests and encouraging his initiative. The person who will be taking care of your child should be interested enough to find out what the child likes to do, the games he likes to play, and she will respect his choice of activity.

Babies need special treatment and more attention. The day care mother should be aware of the special needs of infants.



If your child requires temporary boarding care

Ask yourself, first of all, if twenty-four hour boarding care is necessary, or if some arrangement could be made for your husband or a relative or friend to care for your child in his own home in the evening and overnight. It may not be possible to arrange this, and if you will require boarding care for a period of time, there are several things to keep in mind.

Prepare your child for his temporary home as best you can, explaining as fully as he is able to understand the reasons for the placement and stressing the temporary nature of the plan. Prepare him also with visits to the home, and assess with particular care the home and the substitute mother. Remember that 24 hour care away from home places extra emotional demands on your child, and requires a warm and understanding day care mother.

If you are unable to visit the temporary care home during the period of placement, arrange for friends and relatives to visit your child and perhaps take him for outings. Keep in touch with the home as best you can by telephone and mail, and ask any visiting relatives or friends to keep you posted.

You can help the day care mother

Be sure the day care mother has information about your child—his age, his progress at school, nicknames if any, names and ages of brothers or sisters, allergies, what he likes to do, his eating and sleeping habits. She should also have the address and phone number where you can be reached during the day, as well as your home address and phone number; and the name and phone number of the child's doctor. It is also advisable for her to have the name, address and phone number of a friend who might be called in an emergency, if you were not available. Decide with her on exact emergency procedure.

Discuss with her your opinions regarding discipline, sleep, meals, toilet training, etc. so that you and she can work closely together to help the child and solve any difficulties that may arise. Remember that if she is willing to share with you the responsibility of the care

of your child, she needs all the help you can give her so that she can care for him effectively. The two of you need to work hand in hand so that there can be a close relationship between the child's own home and his day care home.

It is a good idea to visit the day care home often, especially during the first weeks, to see how your child is getting along. If the child is a baby, decide who is to provide the formula and baby foods, and agree on diaper arrangements. If the child is a school-age child and is allowed to join in activities after classes, these arrangements should be understood by the day care mother.

Business arrangements

Agree what you will pay for the services. Find out what the fee covers — if you pay for absent days, if you pay in advance. Get dated, signed receipts for each payment, and have agreements in writing.

Arrange with the day care mother at what time and by whom the child will be called for.

Arrange with the day care mother what will happen if she is ill. Find out if she has made arrangements for a substitute to come into the home to take over temporarily.

Helping your child to be happy in his day care home

If possible, take your child several times to visit the home before he is left there on his own. Leave him by himself only a few hours the first time and be sure to be back when you have told him you will. Each child has a certain adjustment period to his new surroundings and a child has to get to know the day care mother in his own way for her to earn his trust.

Chat with the mother so the child feels you and she are friends. At the end of the day, take time to hear about things that have happened during the day. This brings the child's two homes together. If at home he seems cheerful and active, eats and sleeps well, and talks about what happened during the day, you can assume he is getting along fine in the day care home. However, if you should find that he gets easily upset in his own home, continually cries at being left, and is eating and sleeping poorly, you should give his day care situation some thought. You might want to discuss it with the day care mother to see if you can solve the matter. If a solution is not found, consider alternative courses of action — perhaps seeking the advice of a counsellor, or considering other arrangements for your child.

We are willing to help you with your day care questions. Phone or write:

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